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White-Collar Salaries, March 1986

Large firms pay more than small firms on average, but differences exist by occupation and skill level, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. The survey of white-collar salaries shows that clerical workers and recent hires in professional and administrative positions typically are paid 10 to 20 percent more in large firms (2,500 workers or more) than in those employing 50 to 999 workers. In contrast, the pay advantage for fully-experienced professionals covered by the survey is usually under 5 percent. (See illustration in table 1.)

The national survey of professional, administrative, technical, and clerical pay, the basis for these comparisons, was expanded in 1986 to increase its coverage of firms with as few as 50 workers, including small firms in high technology. In conducting this survey, commonly referred to as the PATC survey, the Bureau of Labor Statistics carries out its responsibility under the Federal Pay Comparability Act of 1970. The Bureau prepares a list of establishments and collects, tabulates, and reports the data. The survey design, however, is the responsibility of the President's Pay Agent.

Table 1. Relative pay levels by size of establishment, selected white-collar occupations in private establishments, March 1986

Job classification	Mean salaries for establishment size groups as a percent of surveywide averages			
	All establishments	50 to 999 workers	1,000 to 2,499 workers	2,500 workers or more
Accountants I	100	96	104	107
Accountants III	100	98	101	107
Accountants IV	100	99	101	102
Engineers I	100	93	102	104
Engineers III	100	97	104	101
Engineers IV	100	98	103	100
Computer Programmers I	100	94	102	110
Computer Programmers III	100	97	98	104
Computer Programmers IV	100	98	98	102

NOTE: Level I staff are trainees; level III are experienced nonsupervisory staff working on conventional assignments; and level IV are experienced staff working on more complex assignments in a supervisory or nonsupervisory capacity.

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The Pay Agent--the Secretary of Labor and the Directors of the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget--specifies the geographic scope of the survey, the industries to be studied, the minimum establishment size to be included, and the survey occupations. The Agent also formulates comparability procedures, uses the survey results to develop statistical paylines, and recommends comparability pay adjustments to the President. This division of responsibility between the Bureau and the Pay Agent began with the Federal Salary Reform Act of 1962, the first formal expression of the principle of pay comparability for Federal white-collar employees.

Average Salaries, March 1986

A quarter century of PATC survey results have indicated the effects of skill and experience on white-collar pay levels and structure. Table 2 presents the March 1986 average salaries for 26 jobs spanning 112 work levels. Pay for engineers, the largest professional group studied, ranged from $27,866 a year for college graduates in trainee positions to $79,021 for those responsible for highly complex engineering programs. Chemists' average salaries ranged from $22,539 in level I to $74,607 in level VII, the highest level meeting BLS publication standards. Level IV engineers and chemists, among the largest groups in each profession and representing fully experienced employees, averaged $42,677 and $41,548 a year, respectively.

Salaries of accountants averaged from $21,024 a year at level I to $61,546 at level VI. The range for the four levels of auditors surveyed was $21,545 to $39,705. Salaries of public accountants ranged from $20,468 for new graduates at level I to $32,116 for supervisors at level IV. In the survey coding structure, the level designations among these accounting occupations are not synonymous; for example, public accountants levels I-III equate to levels II-IV for accountants and auditors. The accountants, public accountants, and auditors included in the survey had at least bachelor's degrees in accounting or the equivalent in education and experience.

Chief accountants, surveyed separately from accountants, were classified on the scope of their authority and the complexity of the accounting program. Those meeting the requirements of level II averaged $47,963 a year; those with the higher requirements of level IV averaged $80,409.

Buyers responsible for purchasing "off-the-shelf" items and services (level I) were paid annual salaries averaging $21,242. Buyers at level IV, who purchase highly complex technical items that are custom designed and manufactured, averaged $41,304 a year.

Programmer and programmer analyst trainees (level I) averaged $20,832 a year; this was approximately half the average of level V incumbents who plan and direct large computer programming projects or solve unusually complex computer programming problems.

Systems analysts I averaged $29,141 a year. This level includes workers who are familiar with systems analysis procedures and are working independently on routine problems. Systems analysts VI averaged $71,770 a year. At this level, analysts are senior managers responsible for the development and maintenance of very large and complex computer systems.

Attorneys included in the study (all having at least LL.B. degrees and bar membership) were employed in the legal departments of various manufacturing and nonmanufacturing firms. Those performing entry level work involving clearly applicable precedents and well-established facts averaged $31,014 a year; those at level VI, the highest level surveyed, averaged $101,169.

Job analysts and directors of personnel were studied in the personnel management field. Level I job analysts averaged $22,240 a year compared with $38,206 for level IV, who evaluate high level professional, administrative, and managerial jobs. Personnel directors I, who administer conventional programs of 250 to 1,000 workers, averaged $39,817, compared with $75,170 for level IV, the highest publishable level.

The technical support occupations surveyed were computer operator, drafter, engineering technician, and photographer. Computer operators I (work assignments consist of on-the-job-training) were paid an average of $13,727 a year; level II, the largest computer operator group surveyed, averaged $17,219. Among the five engineering technician levels, III and IV accounted for a majority of the technicians and averaged $23,896 and $28,412, respectively. Drafters I, a trainee level, averaged $13,054 a year; the average for drafters V, the highest level studied, was $31,004. Published averages for photographers ranged from $16,636 at level I to $35,094 at the highest (fifth) level studied.

Among the 31 clerical levels surveyed, average yearly salaries ranged from $10,335 for file clerks I to $29,384 for purchasing assistants IV, the highest of a four level series. Averages for 10 of the clerical levels exceeded $19,000; 10 ranged from $15,000 to 19,000; and 11 fell below $15,000.

Changes in salary levels

White-collar salaries increased moderately between March 1985 and March 1986 in that portion of the PATC survey (medium and large firms) covered in both years. Average salaries for most occupations surveyed rose between 3.0 and 5.5 percent over the period--in line with gains reported a year earlier. In contrast, occupational salary increases averaged about 7 percent a year during the 1970's, and more than 9 percent in 1981 and 1982, but started dropping back in 1983. (See table 3.)

Technical Note

This annual survey relates to private industry in metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas of the United States, except Alaska and Hawaii. The industries studied are: Mining, construction, manufacturing, transportation, communications and public utilities, wholesale and retail trade, finance, insurance and real e[illegible]te, and selected services. In 1986, the minimum employment size was changed to 50 wor[illegible]s in each of these industry segments; previously the minimum size varied from 50 to 250 workers, depending on industry group. For additional detail on the scope and method of the survey and occupational definitions (except those introduced in 1986), see BLS Bulletin 2243, "National Survey of Professional, Administrative, Technical, and Clerical Pay, March 1985."

The 1986 bulletin will be issued in November 1986. In addition to providing more detailed nationwide information based on the full survey coverage, it will also report on mean, median, and middle-range salaries by occupational level. Data will also be presented separately for metropolitan areas as a group and for different establishment size categories.

TABLE 2. Average salaries for selected occupations, national survey of professional, administrative, technical, and clerical pay, March 1986

Occupation and class	Number of employees[1]	Average annual salaries[2]
Accountants and Auditors		
Accountants I	13,846	$21,024
Accountants II	29,311	25,556
Accountants III	46,228	31,143
Accountants IV	23,733	39,293
Accountants V	8,227	49,231
Accountants VI	1,397	61,546
Auditors I	1,756	21,545
Auditors II	2,928	26,108
Auditors III	4,709	32,121
Auditors IV	2,022	39,705
Public Accountants I	11,606	20,468
Public Accountants II	11,595	22,714
Public Accountants III	8,897	26,633
Public Accountants IV	4,275	32,116
Chief Accountants I	1,454	47,963
Chief Accountants II	475	62,880
Chief Accountants IV	230	80,409
Attorneys		
Attorneys I	1,377	31,014
Attorneys II	3,199	39,635
Attorneys III	4,347	50,119
Attorneys IV	3,500	63,933
Attorneys V	1,847	78,396
Attorneys VI	587	101,169
Buyers		
Buyers I	6,914	21,242
Buyers II	22,990	26,369
Buyers III	18,323	33,580
Buyers IV	4,798	41,304
Programmers and Systems Analysts		
Computer Programmers I	15,974	20,832
Computer Programmers II	38,540	24,558
Computer Programmers III	46,996	29,324
Computer Programmers IV	21,524	34,919
Computer Programmers V	9,402	42,934
Systems Analysts I	21,402	29,141
Systems Analysts II	47,518	34,881
Systems Analysts III	38,943	41,997
Systems Analysts IV	15,506	49,515
Systems Analysts V	2,666	58,404
Systems Analysts VI	233	71,770
Personnel Management		
Job Analysts I	183	22,240
Job Analysts II	350	25,288
Job Analysts III	624	30,605
Job Analysts IV	520	38,208
Directors of Personnel I	1,849	39,817
Directors of Personnel II	2,082	46,328
Directors of Personnel III	1,179	63,855
Directors of Personnel IV	395	75,170
Chemists and Engineers		
Chemists I	3,580	22,539
Chemists II	6,673	27,205
Chemists III	10,244	34,141
Chemists IV	9,257	41,548
Chemists V	7,266	50,678
Chemists VI	3,632	60,796
Chemists VII	848	74,607
Engineers I	40,469	27,866
Engineers II	71,336	31,194
Chemists and Engineers--continued		
Engineers III	145,165	$35,715
Engineers IV	157,031	42,677
Engineers V	111,913	50,769
Engineers VI	52,105	58,883
Engineers VII	13,395	68,602
Engineers VIII	3,097	79,021
Technical support		
Engineering Technicians I	5,797	16,882
Engineering Technicians II	17,342	20,312
Engineering Technicians III	32,193	23,896
Engineering Technicians IV	35,397	28,412
Engineering Technicians V	19,399	32,718
Drafters I	2,982	13,054
Drafters II	12,102	15,854
Drafters III	25,970	20,201
Drafters IV	24,371	24,652
Drafters V	14,362	31,004
Computer Operators I	10,704	13,727
Computer Operators II	37,530	17,219
Computer Operators III	25,698	21,524
Computer Operators IV	8,059	24,550
Computer Operators V	1,260	28,986
Photographers I	401	16,636
Photographers II	673	22,896
Photographers III	791	27,009
Photographers IV	511	31,584
Photographers V	104	35,094
Clerical		
Accounting Clerks I	36,023	12,517
Accounting Clerks II	135,183	14,687
Accounting Clerks III	79,215	17,954
Accounting Clerks IV	22,354	21,872
File Clerks I	20,916	10,335
File Clerks II	10,110	12,156
File Clerks III	2,100	15,625
Key Entry Operators I	68,827	13,146
Key Entry Operators II	30,770	16,901
Messengers	9,842	12,276
Personnel Clerks/Assistants I	2,521	14,193
Personnel Clerks/Assistants II	4,414	16,903
Personnel Clerks/Assistants III	3,255	19,696
Personnel Clerks/Assistants IV	1,298	23,702
Purchasing Clerks/Assistants I	6,014	13,994
Purchasing Clerks/Assistants II	5,585	17,282
Purchasing Clerks/Assistants III	4,197	22,381
Purchasing Clerks/Assistants IV	1,037	29,384
Secretaries I	59,859	16,326
Secretaries II	69,450	18,306
Secretaries III	110,604	21,152
Secretaries IV	49,603	25,839
Secretaries V	16,038	28,051
Stenographers I	6,811	18,374
Stenographers II	5,648	21,739
Typists I	25,125	12,584
Typists II	12,842	16,854
General Clerks I	11,811	10,478
General Clerks II	59,359	12,730
General Clerks III	65,101	15,500
General Clerks IV	33,472	19,322

1/ Occupational employment estimates relate to the total in all establishments within scope of the survey and not to the number actually surveyed.

2/ Excludes premium pay for overtime and for work on weekends, holidays, and late shifts. Also excluded are performance bonuses and lump-sum payments of the type negotiated in the auto and aerospace industries, as well as profit-sharing payments, attendance bonuses, Christmas or year-end bonuses, and other nonproduction bonuses. Cost-of-living allowances and incentive payments, however, are included.

NOTE: The following occupational levels were surveyed but insufficient data were obtained to warrant publication: Chief accountant I and V; director of personnel V; chemist VIII; computer operator VI; and personnel clerk/assistant V. Published in 1986 but not in 1985 are photographer V, a new first level of purchasing clerk/assistant, and a newly-added series of general clerks.

TABLE 3. Percent increases in occupational pay levels, medium and large size firms 1/, March 1970 to March 1986.

Occupation	Average annual percent increase 2/						
	1970 to 1980	1980 to 1981	1981 to 1982	1982 to 1983	1983 to 1984	1984 to 1985	1985 to 1986
Professional, administrative, and technical:							
Accountants	7.3	10.0	9.6	6.9	4.7	4.8	4.3
Chief accountants	7.9	9.5	11.4	4.2	5.7	6.2	5.4
Auditors	6.6	10.3	9.4	6.1	8.0	3.8	1.9
Public accountants	3/	7.9	6.6	7.1	2.3	4.3	3.0
Job analysts	7.0	7.6	9.2	6.7	5.3	5.8	3.8
Directors of personnel	7.8	11.4	9.6	8.3	5.3	6.5	5.5
Attorneys	7.0	9.8	11.4	7.6	4.8	5.9	6.7
Buyers	7.0	9.8	9.4	6.2	5.3	3.8	4.9
Chemists	7.2	9.4	10.4	5.8	5.3	5.6	5.2
Engineers	7.0	10.9	10.2	7.1	5.2	4.9	4.5
Engineering technicians	7.2	10.2	9.4	5.9	4.9	3.7	4.1
Drafters	7.3	10.9	8.4	7.6	3.6	3.7	3.3
Computer operators	3/	-	8.9	6.8	-	4.2	3.8
Photographers	3/	-	9.7	8.1	6.9	2.3	3.5
Computer programmers	3/	-	-	6.5	-	4.5	3.8
Systems analysts	-	-	-	-	-	4.0	5.0
Clerical:							
Accounting clerks	6.7	9.6	8.9	8.1	3.8	4.8	4.8
File clerks	6.9	8.0	7.2	6.4	2.1	3.7	3.3
Key entry operators	7.3	8.2	9.4	7.3	3.4	3.6	3.0
Messengers	6.7	9.7	6.4	9.2	2.9	4.1	5.8
Personnel clerks/assistants	3/	-	10.2	9.7	5.4	2.7	4.6
Purchasing clerks/assistants	3/	-	-	9.3	6.8	5.1	6.3
Secretaries	3/	-	9.2	7.1	5.0	4.7	5.6
Stenographers	8.4	12.1	13.8	8.6	5.5	4.9	2.4
Typists	7.1	10.2	10.1	6.8	2.0	5.9	3.5

1/ Excludes data from "expansion units" (each employing 50 to 250 workers) added for the first time in 1986.

2/ The procedure for determining the increase for each occupation includes constant weighting: Average annual salaries for all reported levels of an occupation were combined using employment in the more recent year as a constant employment weight in both years. This eliminates the effects of differences in the proportion of employees at various work levels in the two surveys.

3/ Average rate of increase was not computed when data were available for fewer than 8 years.

NOTE: Dashes indicate that data were not available for one or more years because the survey occupation was newly added or the definition was revised.

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